

the future, and show what all the players must do to meet the telecom needs of their community for today and tomorrow.

These plans take resources to develop. This amendment would provide those funds.

Providers say they're more likely to invest in an area if it has a plan that makes a business case for the costly infrastructure investment. Communities want to provide them with that plan, but they need help developing it.

Unfortunately, many communities get stuck on that first step. They don't have the resources to do the studies and planning required to attract service.

So the members of my Working Group came up with a solution: have the Federal Government provide competitive grants that local communities can use to develop their plans.

I took that idea and put it into a bill that I introduced in June 2001, S. 1056, the Community Telecommunications Planning Act of 2001. The basic structure of that amendment was incorporated into the Farm Bill.

When you think about it, it just makes sense. Right now the Federal Government already provides money to help communities plan other infrastructure improvements, everything from roads and bridges to wastewater facilities.

The amendment would provide rural and underserved communities with grant money for creating community plans, technical assessments and other analytical work that needs to be done.

With these grants, communities will be able to turn their desire for access into real access that can improve their communities and strengthen their economies. This amendment can open the door for thousands of small and rural areas across our state to tap the potential of the information economy.

I will work to ensure this provision is included in the final bill along with the other critical telecommunications initiatives that passed the Senate yesterday.

BUTTER/POWDER TILT

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, sets a price for the purchase of non-fat dry milk and the economic impact of USDA's decision is very important to California dairy farmers. On May 31, 2001, USDA made a decision to drop the price at which it will purchase non-fat dry milk as part of the dairy price support program.

USDA did not provide the dairy industry with an opportunity to provide information or comment on the Department's recommended decision. There was no advance notice or public hearings.

USDA conducted an economic analysis and all of the options may have been analyzed. But this information has not been released to the public, even though it was requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

In the first 6 months after USDA's decision to lower the price for non-fat

dry milk took effect, California's dairy farm families lost tens of millions of dollars. In meetings with USDA, California farmers learned that another drop in the price is under consideration, which would result in millions more lost to dairy farmers. California produces 40 percent of the nation's supply of non-fat dry milk and so California could be hit hard yet again.

Transparency is a critical part of a fair and equitable decision-making process and it does not currently exist in the USDA process for setting the non-fat dry milk price. The Secretary is currently required to make a decision that includes factors such as cost reduction to USDA. The Secretary also must consider other factors that the Secretary considers appropriate. I believe additional steps should be taken during the conference to assure transparency in the Secretary's decision-making process.

Factors that may be important to a decision to change the prices for butter and non-fat dry milk include: whether the decision will result in an intended change in milk production, whether the change will actually reduce government purchases and related costs, whether it will change producer milk prices, and whether other market factors, such as imports, have an effect.

Milk Protein Concentrate, MPC, is of particular concern. A recent GAO study documented significant increases in MPC imports that may be displacing domestic milk protein products. Since USDA is not releasing its economic analysis, we cannot know whether this important issue is being properly considered.

I would like to ask the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Senator HARKIN, if he would be willing to work with me on additional language to address this issue during the conference?

Mr. HARKIN. I would be pleased to work to address the concerns of the Senator from California regarding USDA procedures for the dairy support program.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S CHINA VISIT

Mr. CRAIG. Mr. President, later this month President Bush will be visiting the People's Republic of China. Clearly this is going to be an important visit. The issues the President will discuss with China's leaders are among the most important of our national agenda, including the following:

The war on terrorism, where we need China's continued support and cooperation.

The global economy and our bilateral economic relations with the PRC, a new member of the WTO.

Security relations in Asia where both of our countries have important interests and long-standing and close ties to other regional powers.

Among all these issues, though, one that will undoubtedly be raised by the PRC is Taiwan. It is a pretty safe bet that the PRC's leaders will try to use

the President's visits to win some concessions on issues relating to Taiwan. They will probe for any signs that the United States is willing to compromise some of our interests in a strong U.S.-ROC relationship in exchange for real or promised strengthening of our ties with Beijing.

I know the President will be ready for this gambit, and will be fully prepared and determined to turn back any such efforts by Beijing. The President has already made it clear how important our ties with Taiwan are to the United States, and he has made it equally clear that he will not compromise our interest in regard to Taiwan in any way.

I am confident he also knows that as he pursues this strong, principled and sensible stand, he will have the full backing of the U.S. Senate. He will not stand for any Beijing attempts to undermine U.S.-ROC relations, and he knows the Senate of the United States won't, either.

The fact is, the Republic of China is one of our best friends in the region. It is also one of the region's strongest economies and most vibrant democracies. We have extensive ties to Taiwan, which are both articulated and protected in the Taiwan Relations Act. We are not going to do anything to compromise those ties.

I know I speak for all Senators when I express the wish that the President's visit to the PRC will be productive and advance our interests in Asia and the world, and when I express the confidence that U.S.-ROC relations will continue to be strong and to prosper, even as our relations with Beijing evolve.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in keeping with my policy on public disclosure of holds, today I placed a hold on further action on the Clean Diamond Trade Act, legislation reported out by House of Representatives.

Although this bill is very important to the continent of Africa's efforts to rid itself of rebels that use the sale of rough diamonds to overthrow legitimate governments, the measures in this legislation fall within the jurisdiction of the Finance Committee.

The proposed legislation calls for prohibiting diamond imports and should be discussed thoroughly before any rash decisions are made. With this in mind it is necessary for this bill to be referred to the Finance Committee to be heard and debated by our members before we send this legislation back to the floor.

NATIONAL DUCHENNE MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, as we commemorate National Duchenne Awareness Week, I express my gratitude to my colleagues and to the Bush administration for their support late last year in passing H.R. 717, the Muscular Dystrophy Community Assistance Research and Education Act.